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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4537

INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RHBVAKS/COMUSNAVCENT PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000107

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP, NEA/RA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [IR](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: KUWAIT UNHAPPY OVER PUBLIC "OUTING" ON PATRIOT DEAL

REF: A. MUSCAT 71

[¶](#)B. KUWAIT 95

[¶](#)C. KUWAIT 61

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and d

[¶](#)11. (C) Like some of its Arabian Gulf neighbors (ref A), the GoK was embarrassed and chagrined by discussion in a January 31 New York Times article linking plans to deploy defensive missile systems to Kuwait and a number of other Gulf countries to possible Iranian missile attacks. The article comes only days after a high-profile January 26 - 27 visit to Kuwait by Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani during which the Speaker pointedly and publicly warned GCC states not to allow U.S. bases on their territories to be used for attacks on Iran (refs A and B). In tandem, the two events have served to heighten Kuwaiti concerns about the potential for an armed confrontation between Iran and the U.S. (or between Iran and Israel), and increased fears that should such a contingency occur, Kuwait would be caught in the cross-fire.

[¶](#)12. (C) Following the New York Times story, the GoK moved quickly to background local media, with official sources stating that the bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreement between Kuwait and the U.S. precluded the use of bases in Kuwait for offensive operations and affirming that Kuwait would not let its territory be used for attacks against Iran. Regardless of these clarifications and despite the fact that the systems in question are entirely defensive, commentators quickly seized on the story to allege in the local press that Kuwait could become "the fuel" in the fire of war between Iran and the United States. Commenting on this anxiety, Parliament Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi told the Ambassador February 4 that the missile defense story was but one example where subtle and sophisticated U.S. diplomacy was being done in by the media and by misunderstanding of how an issue would play in the region. The Speaker, somewhat defensively, also challenged local reporting of Larijani's statements, which he downplayed.

[¶](#)13. (C) Comment: The GoK is not embarrassed by the fact of its desire for additional missile defense systems (which was raised favorably and without controversy during last month's JMC in Washington), but rather by the spotlight which has now been shone on the matter and the direct linkage to current frictions with Iran. Such public "outing" highlights the contradictions in Kuwaiti policy towards Iran, and in particular complicates Kuwait's diplomatic effort to present itself to its far larger and more powerful Persian neighbor as an unbiased if not sympathetic interlocutor. The Foreign

Minister, who is out of the capital, has requested a meeting with Ambassador upon his return and we expect this issue to be raised. Yet to be determined is the depth of Kuwaiti pique and whether it would affect a future formal request to deploy additional U.S. Patriot batteries here; less likely to be at issue, we believe, is the approximately \$200 million worth of pending Patriot-related FMS cases. End Comment.

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JONES